PRESS STATEMENT

UPDATE ON THE MARBURG OUTBREAK

October 29th 2012

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
P. O. BOX 7272,
KAMPALA - UGANDA
Today on behalf of the Ministry of Health, I take this opportunity to welcome you all to this press briefing organized to update you on the outbreak of Marburg in the country. You will recall that we declared an outbreak of this highly infectious disease on October 19th and since then the Ministry of Health and its partners have undertaken a number of interventions to control the spread of the disease.

I wish to inform you that cases are now reported in the neighbouring districts of Ibanda and Mbarara. However, I want to assure you that the Ministry of Health and its partners are on the ground in the mentioned districts to contain the spread and manage the identified cases.

To date, the death toll of both the probable and confirmed cases stands at eight, with the latest being a case that died at the isolation facility at Rushoroza Health Centre III on October 27th (Saturday). The case that was referred from Ibanda Hospital – Ibanda to Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital died on October 24th.

I wish to clarify that since the onset of the outbreak, we have collected a total of 45 samples of which nine were confirmed positive; five in Kabale, two in Kampala and two from Ibanda.

Working closely with the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), we have set up a field diagnostic laboratory at Kabale Regional Referral Hospital. All samples from the affected neighbouring districts will hence be taken to this laboratory for quick diagnostics. This will shorten the time when we get results to three hours from the original 24 hours due to distance. Further serological testing will be undertaken at the Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI).

Due to the presence of cases in other districts, we have established temporary isolation facilities to accommodate the suspected and confirmed cases. In Ibanda, a temporary isolation ward has been created at Ibanda Hospital, while plans are underway to set up a proper isolation facility by tomorrow.

At Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital, a separate temporary has been designated for the suspect Marburg cases. A triage has also been set up at the causality ward.

We have assembled a team of experts to work in the newly established isolation facilities and they are expected in these districts today. We also plan to undertake infection control procedures in these facilities as safety measures for the workers and the admitted patients.

Today, the total number of cases admitted is 12. Eight are currently admitted at Rushoroza Health Center III in Kabale. Two confirmed cases, a couple (husband and wife) still remain admitted at Mulago National Referral Hospital.
Another two suspect cases are currently admitted at Mayanja Memorial Hospital in Mbarara.

There are seven suspect cases (student nurses) quarantined at Ibanda. These cases attended to the confirmed case that later died at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital on October 24th. Other health workers who attended to the patient are closely being monitored.

We have line-listed a total of 436 contacts for close observation in four districts of Kabale, Kampala, Ibanda, Mbarara, Fort Portal and Rukungiri. Those being monitored got into contact with either the dead or confirmed cases. The team continues to monitor them on a daily basis for possible signs and symptoms of this highly infectious disease until they have completed 21 days without showing any signs and symptoms.

We have completed an orientation of the Kabale district taskforce on Marburg case presentation and prevention, barrier nursing and infection control. Plans are underway to conduct the orientation at Ibanda and at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital.

We have trained a total of 42 volunteers from the Uganda Red Cross Society and deployed them to conduct house to house community sensitization and active case tracing.

We plan to set up burial committees in Ibanda district to manage burials of people suspected to have died of the disease. The committee will be oriented on burial procedures and infection prevention and control. This is one of the control measures to curb the spread of the highly contagious disease.

The Ministry of Health would also wish to clarify on media reports that one of its officers, Dr. Sheila Ndyanabangi, the head of the Mental Health Unit Division, had contracted Marburg and had been isolated. Dr. Ndyanabangi has not been isolated but has been advised to exercise social distancing. She is one of the contacts who are being monitored. She has not developed any signs or symptoms of the disease and therefore cannot be isolated from the community. She is due to complete the 21 days of observation.

I once again urge the public to take the following measures to avert the spread of the disease.

- Report immediately any suspected patient to a nearby health unit
- Avoid direct contact with body fluids of a person suspected to be suffering from Marburg by using protective materials like gloves and masks
- Persons who have died of Marburg must be handled with strong protective wear and buried immediately
- Avoid eating dead animals
- Avoid unnecessary public gathering especially in the affected district
• Burial of suspicious community deaths should be done under close supervision of well trained burial teams
• Report all suspicious deaths to a nearby health facility

Once again the Ministry of Health calls upon the public to stay calm as all possible measures are being undertaken to control the situation.

Hon. Dr. Christine Ondoa

Minister of Health